DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 449 491 CS 014 261

TITLE	A Trip to Wonderland. [Lesson Plan].
INSTITUTION	National Endowment for the Humanities (NFAH), Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY	MCI WorldCom, Arlington, VA.; Council of the Great City Schools, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2000-00-00
NOTE	11p.; Small print in the column of text on the right side of the document may not reproduce well.
AVAILABLE FROM	Full text at: http://edsitement.neh.gov/lessonplans/alice.html.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Beginning Reading; Class Activities; *Emergent Literacy; *Imagination; *Language Arts; Lesson Plans; Literature Appreciation; Primary Education; Reading Aloud to Others; Units of Study
IDENTIFIERS	*Alice in Wonderland; Carroll (Lewis G)

ABSTRACT

This unit explores elements of wonder, distortion, fantasy, and whimsy in "The Nursery 'Alice,'" Lewis Carroll's adaptation for younger readers of his beloved classic "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland." In its 6 lessons, students will first explore their concepts about Wonderland, and then listen to the opening chapters of the story and view Sir John Tenniel's illustrations from the original edition. Using images of "big" and "small" from Alice's experiences, students develop these concepts in their own drawings. Students then compare Carroll's fantastic animals with creatures from other children's stories and use computers to craft images of their own fantasy creatures. Finally, students listen to Carroll's whimsical poetry and write whimsical verses of their own. Intended for grades K-2, the lesson notes subject areas covered, time required to complete the lesson, skills used and taught in the lesson, and lists of the standards developed by professional associations or governments that are related to the lesson. Activities to extend the lesson conclude the lesson plan. (SR)

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A Trip to Wonderland

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Lesson Plans

SEARCH EDSITEMENT

Introduction

Let your students tumble down the rabbit hole into Wonderland, where their imaginations will soar to new heights. From Lewis Carroll to Dr. Seuss, from fantastic creatures to funny foods-these lessons are bound to excite and delight.

This unit explores elements of wonder, distortion, fantasy, and whimsy in *The Nursery "Alice,"* Lewis Carroll's adaptation for younger readers of his beloved classic *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. After exploring their concepts about Wonderland, students listen to the opening chapters of the story and view Sir John Tenniel's illustrations from the original edition. Using images of "big" and "small" from Alice's experiences, students develop these concepts in their own drawings. Students then compare Carroll's fantastic animals with creatures from other children's stories and use computers to craft images of their own fantasy creatures. Finally, students listen to Carroll's whimsical poetry and write whimsical verses of their own.

Guiding Questions: What is a Wonderland? How is a Wonderland different from everyday life? How can we enter our own Wonderlands through reading, drawing and writing?

Learning Objectives

After this unit, students will have:

- listened to a young readers' version of Lewis Carroll's classic text *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*
- explored fantastic imagery, both visual and textual, in various works of children's literature
- used the work of published illustrators and authors as inspiration for their own visual art and poetry

Lesson Plan

1 Write the word "Wonderland" on the blackboard in large letters and ask students if they have ever heard of it. While some students might be familiar with the title of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, others may have different associations. Ask students if they think Wonderland is a place (like, for example, Disneyland). Why does the name of this place include the word "wonder"? Ask the children to close their eyes and try to imagine Wonderland. What do they see? To some students, Wonderland might be a place in their dreams or imaginations, while others might think of it as similar to an amusement park, a children's television show, or a favorite video game. Would they like to visit Wonderland? Why or why not?

SUBJECT AREAS ▸

Literature & Language Arts: British

Literature & Language Arts: American

Literature & Language Arts: Fiction

Literature & Language Arts: Poetry

Art & Culture: Visual Arts

GRADE LEVELS ▸

K-2

TIME REQUIRED ▸

Parts 1-2: One 45-minute class period

Part 3: One 45-minute class period

Part 4: One 45-minute class period

Part 5: One 45-minute class period

Part 6: One 45-minute class period

Extending the Lesson: Two to three class periods, 45 minutes each

SKILLS ▸

observation and description

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Tell students that there is a famous book called *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, written a very long time ago (1865) by a man named Lewis Carroll. Explain to them that Carroll wrote two versions of his story-one for older children (perhaps their older brothers' or sisters' ages) and one for children their own age. Tell students that the version of the story that he wrote especially for younger children is called *The Nursery "Alice,"* and that they are going to listen to it together in class.

For an electronic version of *The Nursery "Alice,"* which can be accessed through the EDSITEment-reviewed **Victorian** Web site.

2 Read aloud the first two chapters of *The Nursery "Alice."* In Chapter One, Alice dreams of seeing the White Rabbit and falling down the rabbit hole. As this image may be alarming to some children, be sure to reassure them that this was only a dream, and that nothing bad is going to happen to Alice.

In Chapter Two, Alice drinks the potion marked "Drink Me" and becomes "smaller, and smaller, till at last she was just the size of a little doll!" She then eats the cake marked "Eat Me" and becomes very tall: "She grew, and she grew, and she grew. Taller than she was before! Taller than any child! Taller than any grown-up person! Taller, and taller, and taller! Just look at the picture, and you'll see how tall she got!"

Have students think of situations in which they have felt very big (e.g., inside a playhouse or treehouse) or very small (e.g., beside a large building). Have they ever seen themselves become bigger or smaller (e.g., in a house of mirrors, or in a reflection or shadow)? How did these experiences make them feel?

Show students the pictures of Alice and ask them the question that Carroll poses at the end of the chapter: "Which would you have liked the best, do you think, to be a little tiny Alice, no larger than a kitten, or a great tall Alice, with your head always knocking against the ceiling?" Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of being small or big (an idea that will resonate for most young children).

3 Tell students that they are now going to "help" Alice by making things for her to use during her trip to Wonderland. Remind them of the story of Thumbelina, in which the tiny girl sleeps in a walnut shell with the petals of violets as her mattress and a rose petal as her cover. What objects could the "little tiny Alice" and the "great tall Alice" use, and how? (The small Alice might use a mushroom as an umbrella or a shoe as a boat, for example, while the big Alice might use a mixing bowl as a drinking cup or a rake as a comb.)

Divide the class into groups of three to five students each. Give each group a supply of sturdy construction paper or oaktag, pencils, erasers, scissors, and a set of colored pencils or markers. Assign each group to imagine five objects that could be used in different ways by either the "little tiny Alice" or the "great tall Alice." After students have drawn their objects, have them cut them out (younger students might need help with this) and put all of their group's objects in a manila folder or envelope.

Redistribute the envelopes so that each group has a collection of objects that were created by another group. Have students try to guess how each of the objects could be used by either the big Alice or the small Alice. If time permits, you can continue the game by passing the envelopes of objects from group to group..

4 Read aloud the next three chapters of the story, in which Alice grows small and then large again. In

comparing and contrasting
interpreting written and visual information
collaboration
creative writing
visual art

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT ▸

NCTE/IRA List of Standards for the English Language Arts

2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience. (more)
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. (more)
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts. (more)
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities. (more)
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information). (more)

National Standards for Arts Education

Visual Arts
1. Understanding and applying

media, techniques, and processes (more)
3. Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas (more)

View your state's standards

In addition to the White Rabbit, who is introduced in Chapter One, several other creatures enter the story in Chapters Four and Five: the Dodo, the Duck, the Lory, the Eaglet, and the Lizard. Show students the illustrations so they can see what these animals look like. You might also wish to show them pictures of other creatures that appear later in the book (the Dear Little Puppy, the Blue Caterpillar, the Cheshire Cat, the Gryphon, and the Mock Turtle). Compare these animals to creatures found in other familiar children's stories, such as *Where the Wild Things Are, The Rainbow Goblins, James and the Giant Peach, The Wind in the Willows, Winnie-the-Pooh, Stuart Little, Charlotte's Web*, or the many books of Dr. Seuss. (See "Print Resources" at the end of the lesson plans for a list of books referred to throughout this unit.) Discuss the ways that these creatures are similar to or different from animals the students might encounter in real life.

Next, have students visit the EDSITEment-reviewed website **Art Safari**, where they can explore animals and art click to view Henri Rousseau's painting "The Sleeping Gypsy." After examining Rousseau's work, students can use a specially designed computer program to create their own fantastic animals. Access the **drawing program**

If you have limited computer access in your classroom, students may use crayons, colored pencils, markers or found materials to create two- or three-dimensional creatures, drawing upon images from children's literature for inspiration.

5 Now turn to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to read some of the whimsical poetry that Carroll included in the full-length version of the story. Carroll's original version, with illustrations by Tenniel, has been widely published and is available in libraries and bookstores. "The Lobster Quadrille" contains images of animals that will appeal to young children's imaginations.

> "Will you walk a little faster?" said a whiting to a snail,
> "There's a porpoise close behind us and he's standing on my tail."
> See how eagerly the lobsters and the turtles all advance!
> They are waiting on the shingle-will you come and join the dance? Will you, wo'n't you, will you, wo'n't you, will you join the dance? Will you, wo'n't you, will you, wo'n't you, will you join the dance?
>
> "You can really have no notion how delightful it will be
> When they take us up and throw us, with the lobsters, out to sea!" But the snail replied
> "Too far, too far!" and gave a look askance- Said he thanked the whiting kindly, but he would not join the dance. Would not, could not, would not, could not, would not join the dance.
> Would not, could not, would not, could not, would not join the dance.
>
> "What matters it how far we go?" his scaly friend replied.
> "There is another shore, you know, upon the other side.
> The further off from England the nearer is to France-
> Then turn not pale, beloved snail, but come and join the dance."

> Will you, wo'n't you, will you, wo'n't you, will you join the dance? Will you, wo'n't you, will you, wo'n't you, will you join the dance?

Have students recall the different sea creatures that are mentioned in the poem. Ask the students: What other animals could Carroll have included in his poem? If you were the snail, would you join the dance? Why or why not? You might wish to compare the animals in Carroll's poem to the fantastic creatures found in Dr. Seuss's *One fish two fish red fish blue fish* or *Ogden Nash's Zoo*. (See "Print Resources" at the end of the lesson plans for a list of books referred to throughout this unit.)

Have students write their own verses featuring the fantasy creatures they create in Lesson 4. Younger students (grades K-1) may use invented spelling to create funny sentences about their animals, while older students (grade 2) may write short stories or poems.

6 Ask students to recall stories or poems about special foods-e.g., Dr. Seuss's *Green Eggs and Ham*, Maurice Sendak's *Chicken Soup with Rice*, or *Rain Makes Applesauce*, by Julian Scheer. (See "Print Resources" at the end of the lesson plans for a list of books referred to throughout this unit.) You may wish to have some of these books on hand to read aloud. Then read aloud Carroll's poem "Turtle Soup," also from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*:

> Beautiful Soup, so rich and green,
> Waiting in a hot tureen!
> Who for such dainties would not stoop!
> Soup of the evening, beautiful Soup!
> Soup of the evening, beautiful Soup!
> Beau-ootiful Soo-oop!
> Beau-ootiful Soo-oop!
> Soo-oop of the e-e-evening,
> Beautiful, beautiful Soup!
>
> Beautiful Soup! Who cares for fish,
> Game, or any other dish!
> Who would not give all else for two
> pennyworth only of beautiful Soup!
> Pennyworth only of beautiful Soup!
> Beau-ootiful Soo-oop!
> Beau-ootiful Soo-oop!
> Soo-oop of the e-e-evening,
> Beautiful, beauti-FUL SOUP!

Ask students to think of the most unusual or wonderful foods that they can imagine. From what ingredients would these foods be made? What would these foods taste like? What colors would they be? Who would eat these foods, and where?

Finally, have students create "funny food" verses of their own. When the verses are complete, you might want

to create a bulletin board display or publish the students' work in a class anthology.

Extending the Lesson

After completing this unit of study, have your students convert the classroom into a "Wonderland Museum," featuring the many works of art and poetry they have created. Invite parents or other classes to visit the museum, with students acting as tour guides. In addition to the children's artwork, the museum might include "large" and "small" areas, or tin foil "mirrors" where visitors can view themselves from different perspectives. Some students might wish to costume themselves as creatures from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* or other works of fantasy literature. With the help of parents, a café serving strangely colored foods could be created; costumed students could act as waiters, offering refreshments on oddly shaped trays.